



**February 6, 2024**

## Upcoming Events

[Eastern Region – Regional Meeting & Fire Training](#) – Feb. 7

[Landowner Woods & Wildlife Conference – Southwest Virginia](#) – Feb. 10

[Landowner Woods & Wildlife Conference – Northern Virginia](#) – Feb. 24

[Virginia Association of Forest Health Professionals Conference](#) – Feb. 12-13

[2024 Forest Management Academy at Sweet Briar College](#) – Sept. 9-13

Have an agency-relevant event to share? Email **Mary Weaver** at [Mary.Weaver@DOF.Virginia.gov](mailto:Mary.Weaver@DOF.Virginia.gov)

## Employee Updates

**Amanda Scheps** has accepted the Working Lands Conservation Program Manager position. This is a new title for the Forestland Conservation Program Manager position recently vacated by Karl Didier. After spending 10 years with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Amanda joined DOF in 2017 as the Eastern Region Forestland Conservation Specialist where she was responsible for the development of new open-space easements in the eastern half of the state. During her tenure, she worked with partner organizations and landowners to facilitate the protection of nearly 15,000 acres of managed forests. Amanda earned a master's degree in landscape architecture from the Virginia Tech School of Architecture and Urban Planning.



**Heather Gargano** was selected for the Community Forestry Specialist position in the Blackwater District. Heather has resided in Virginia Beach, Virginia for the past 37 years and has an A.A.S. in Greenhouse Production and Landscape Design from Tidewater Community College. As an independent designer for the past 10 years, Heather is also a Level 1 Certified Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional and teaches the Principals of Landscape Design at her alma matter, TCC, in Chesapeake.

**Cierra Moss** was selected for the Nursery Technician in Sussex Nursery. Cierra has been a part-timer with DOF for three years. Agriculture and forestry are passions of hers and she looks forward to learning and growing within the organization.



**Justin Altice** has accepted the position of Forest Legacy Program Coordinator to administer the agency's important grant partnership with the USDA Forest Service to identify and protect critical private forested lands through conservation easements and fee simple land purchases.



Justin lives in Barboursville surrounded by forests, having resided in the Charlottesville area for 18 years. He is originally from Franklin County located in Southside Virginia where his grandparents were farmers in the rural landscape. Justin enjoys the shared experience of live music and going on adventures in his small RV. He lives with his wife Alli who is a medical professional, daughter Clara who is a rising 6<sup>th</sup> grader, big dog Roscoe, and cat Jax.

## Agency Updates

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### *Virginia Retirement System Visits*

Representatives from the Virginia Retirement System will be visiting the Salem Office Feb. 12, and Charlottesville Headquarters on Feb. 16, to discuss plans, benefits and programs. If you would like to schedule an appointment with the rep, please contact **John Habel** at [John.Habel@DOF.Virginia.gov](mailto:John.Habel@DOF.Virginia.gov).

### *2023 Forest Health Review*

DOF's Forest Health Program has released the 2023 edition of the [Forest Health Review](#). This publication summarizes significant forest health issues in Virginia and highlights work that was accomplished last year.

### *Appalachian Society of American Foresters Winter Meeting*

Deputy State Forester **Ed Zimmer (pictured)**, Assistant State Forester **Terry Lasher** and several additional members of the agency attended the Appalachian Society of American Foresters (APSAF) meeting in Roanoke from Jan. 23-25. As part of the pre-conference workshops, Hardwood Coordinator **Joe Rossetti** joined Virginia Tech Silviculture Professor Dave Carter, Ph.D. to present a pre-conference hardwood workshop. The workshop focused on updates in hardwood management and included information on development of our central hardwood forests, silvicultural techniques for harvesting timber and how each affects oak regeneration. Other covered topics included non-commercial practices to improve hardwood stands, measuring and assessing stands and site quality, and Virginia's Hardwood Assessment Tool. Ed Zimmer handed off the APSAF Chair's gavel to his successor, and Watershed Specialist **Bill Sweeney** assumed the Chair of the Virginia Division.



### *National Fire Chiefs, Managers and Supervisors Meeting*

Chief of Fire and Emergency Response **John Miller** and DOF Fire staff attended the national Chiefs, Managers and Supervisors meeting the week of Jan. 22. The meeting pulls together forestry fire managers from across the nation to coordinate and collaborate on a wide range of issues facing state-level wildland fire management. Breakout sessions included an after-action review of the southeast's busy 2023 fall fire season, a review of several national-level grant programs, a focus on common wildland fire aviation-related issues, coordination of national-level accomplishment reporting, and an effort to better coordinate

reporting of wildland fires. Half of the final day was used by each of the three regions represented to collaborate on several state-specific issues.

### ***200 Hemlocks Planted at Lesesne State Forest***

Forest health program staff, with help from Urban and Community Forestry Project Coordinator Forest **Delany Long** planted 200 hemlock seedlings at Lesesne State Forest in Nelson County on Jan. 24. Hemlock trees in eastern North America are threatened by the invasive hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). The hemlock trees at Lesesne were planted on a 5'x 5' spacing to grow as a hedge so that one day they can serve as a field insectary (a place for rearing insects) for *Laricobius* predator beetles, which may then be redistributed for HWA control efforts around the state.



### ***Virginia Wavyleaf Managers Meet at DOF HQ***

Forest Health Manager **Lori Chamberlin** and Invasive Species Coordinator **Lindsay Caplan** hosted the Virginia Wavyleaf Managers meeting at DOF HQ on Jan. 25. The group is composed of land managers in Virginia that work to slow the spread of wavyleaf grass, a non-native invasive plant that establishes in forest understory. During the meeting, attendees discussed 2023 accomplishments, treatment and survey plans for 2024, funding needs, and outreach projects.

### ***Southern Group of State Foresters Forest Management Committee Meeting***

Forest Management Director **Dean Cumbia** and District Forester **Jeremy Falkenau** attended the Southern Group of State Foresters, Forest Management Committee meeting on Jan. 23-25 in southern Alabama. The meeting was attended by the forest management leads from the 13 southern states. Agenda topics included national and regional policy updates, U.S. Forest Service information on funding (particularly Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation), underserved landowner outreach, forests and drinking water, forest carbon, and the Tree Farm Program. The meeting also allowed each state to share updates on activities and accomplishments in their respective states.

### ***Basic Law Enforcement Course***

DOF's newest Commissioned Special Forest Wardens completed the agency's Basic Law Enforcement certification class on Jan. 19. The training provides a mix of classroom-based practical instruction and field-based practical exercises to prepare agency personnel for the challenges of forestry, fire law, water quality enforcement, and timber theft related enforcement actions. Basic instruction is also provided in self-defense tactics and the de-escalation of confrontational situations.

### ***Trees Virginia Tree Care Workshop – March 12***

Registration is open for the Roanoke Tree Care Workshop hosted at Virginia Western Community College on March 12. This year's theme is managing urban forest patches. Speakers will discuss the land use change of forests in the region, chipper safety, forestry mulching, building induced resistance in trees and invasive plant management. Full agenda can be found here:

<https://treesvirginia.org/services/events/workshops/2024-roanoke-tree-care-workshop>. The U&CF Team has budgeted for up to 15 DOF staff to attend this event. Please get permission from your supervisor to

attend and email **Jennie** at [Jennifer.McClenny@DOF.Virginia.gov](mailto:Jennifer.McClenny@DOF.Virginia.gov) ) prior to March 1 and she will get you registered for the event.